

Endless Summer by frankiethebard

Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King, Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: AU, Angst, Everyone gets love and happiness, F/M, Fluff, Love Triangle, M/M, Mileven, Multi, OT7, Reddie, Summer Camp, The Losers Club, billy is trash, mike and richie are twins, summertime, the party, this is happening

Language: English

Characters: Barbara "Barb" Holland, Ben Hanscom, Benny Hammond, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eddie Kaspbrak, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Hanlon, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Beverly Marsh/Richie Tozier, Bill Denbrough & Stanley Uris, Bill Denbrough/Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Eleven & Mike Wheeler, Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, The Losers Club & Beverly Marsh

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-01-01

Updated: 2018-01-01

Packaged: 2022-04-03 15:09:50

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 2

Words: 5,422

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

the party and the losers in a summer camp AU. no clowns, no powers, just all of our favorites meeting and having fun and getting to be happy. mostly fluff, a dash of angst, and some (lots) of romance. mike & richie are twins; max & beverly & el are bestie goals; benny & hop are cooks; tons of fannypack eds.

Tags are subject to change as we go.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Well hello there. I couldn't get this idea out of my head, so I thought I'd give it a go. I have a lot of pots on the fire, but this one is just demanding to be written, so my other fics are likely to go on hiatus.

It's really scary to tackle a crossover and incorporate so many characters. I'm hoping to do everyone justice and give everyone attention. Easier said than done with this cast, but I'm trying.

I can't promise fast updates, but I'm hoping at least a few a week. This thing has really no plot aside from getting everyone together. So, um, just enjoy the ride?

As always, please leave me some love and let me know what you think, what you liked or loathed, where I could improve. Lyrics are from the Atari's "in this diary," I own nothing!

(I've modeled Camp Byers off the summer camp I attended in my youth, if anyone is interested I will upload some pictures on my tumblr or something — @elevenseggoobsession)

/chapter one/

/here in this diary

I write you visions of my summer

It was the best I ever had/

The familiar scent of dead fish, sunscreen, wood chips, fresh cut grass, and salty sweat filled his nostrils as Mike Wheeler climbed out of the backseat of his family's station wagon. Overhead, the sky was an endless blur without a cloud in sight, the sun a fat, sweltering golden globe sending down its rays in the best way. He paused,

hanging onto the door frame, watching the flurry of activity that surrounded them.

The gravel parking lot was filled with other parents dropping off their children; older teens in bright yellow T-shirts and hats, holding clipboards, directing where the campers are supposed to put their luggage and giving out cabin assignments; the camp mascot, a scruffy dog called Chester, chases around barking hello. Smiling to himself, Mike cannot mistake the sense of finally being /home/ that settles in his chest.

“Get out of the way, ya sap.”

And just like that, the moment is squashed. Mike turned to face the carbon copy of him, dark eyes magnified behind thick lenses and dark frames. The same mess of charcoal hair, pale freckle skin, too-full lips and long, gangly body is mirrored before him. He rolled his own inky-black eyes at his twin brother and sighed.

“I’m not a sap. Shut up.”

“You shut up.” Richie pushes past him, causing Mike to stumble into the car door with a surprised ‘oof,’ and he glared at the back of his brother’s hideous Hawaiian shirt as he went around the back of the wagon to open the hatch.

“It’s not fair,” Holly whined, drawing Mike’s attention to the small, pouting child in the back seat. Karen rolled her eyes before killing the engine and getting out, smoothing a hand over her perfect brown locks and looking for someone of authority to direct their next move.

“Pretty soon, Holly, you’ll be coming to camp too. By then, Richie and I will be your counselors. That’ll be cool, right?” Mike feels guilty - leaving his youngest sibling alone for the whole summer while he, Richie, and their older sister Nancy, get to stay at Camp Byers. But Holly isn’t old enough, and she will probably be spoiled beyond belief while it’s just her and the parents. But Mike can’t help the pang of sadness he feels at the sight of her furrowed scowl and pooched out lower lip.

“Don’t worry, kid,” Richie intones, having crawled through the back

and now hanging over the seat to messily hug the little girl and tickle her ribs. She fights a smile as he digs his long fingers into her sensitive belly. "We'll right you tons of postcards and you can even sleep in the top bunk at home. I give you full permission."

"Can I play with Princess Leia?" Holly asks, glancing to Mike with that adorable puppy dog look. Pretending to think about it, he stroked his chin and frowned.

"Promise not to color on her and be extra careful?"

"Yes, yes!" Holly bounces in her seat.

"All right, I guess." Mike gives his little sister a hug and then shuts the car door. He moves to help Richie lug their heavy duffle bags and sleeping rolls out of the trunk. Sweat is already making Richie's glasses slide down his nose.

"Didn't bring your /girlfriend/ to camp?" Richie teased as he slams the hatch shut. Mike glares at him, about to tell him off, when their mother strides forward and gives them a look. The one that says, 'quit fighting before I go ballistic,' a look they know all too well.

"You guys are both in Deer Hollow," she said, hands going to her hips and a stern expression on her pretty face. "I better not get any phone calls, you guys hear me? No stupid stunts, Richie. And watch your mouth."

"Hey, whyya pickin' on me? Mikey was the one who did all the calculations for the catapult." Richie nudges his brother in the ribs.

"It was a trebuchet." Mike rolls his eyes. "And don't call me Mikey."

"Regardless. One for out of line, and I'm yanking you both out. And your father will definitely /not/ be pleased." Both boys huff but nod - the threat of interrupting Ted Wheeler from his bubble of oblivious, absentee parenting is always effective.

"And don't forget, I have Nancy keeping an eye on you too." Then Karen gives up the tough act and pulls them both in for a sweaty, too long hug. Richie makes a face at Mike over her shoulder, Mike sticks his tongue out. Not soon enough, Karen is climbing back into the

station wagon and pulling down the dusty dirt drive and far, far away.

Six glorious weeks without parents, homework, or chores. Mike Tampa down the overwhelming surge of excitement that fizzles in his belly as Richie swings a pale arm over his shoulder.

“Onward, my good sir! There is trouble to make and people to annoy!” His British voice comes out, and Mike shoots him a look of annoyance before they both bend and gather their things, taking off for their cabin.

“Smoking kills.”

Beverly Marsh whipped her head up to find a petite, copper-haired girl glaring at her over the time of black Ray Ban sunglasses. She rolls her blue eyes and takes a long drag, then drops the butt to the dirt and toes it out with her dirty Chuck Taylor.

She feels infinitely older than the rest of the girls giggling in the cabin, gushing over clothes and boys and posters of pop stars. Bev knew this was a mistake as soon as Beth suggested it. But her aunt was trying to give her a slice of normalcy, memories that were tinged with sadness and hate and pain. Though she was nearly fourteen, Bev had the figure of a grown woman and eyes that knew too much about the world.

“I won’t rat on you, or anything,” the other girl says. She crossed her arms over her chest and surprisingly, smiled. “I get the feeling that neither of us are going to fit in there.” She cocks her head at the cabin, both of them frowning as a peal of laughter leaks out the screen windows.

“You don’t say.” Beverly quirks an eyebrow and smirks.

“I’m Max, by the way.” She sticks out a petite hand and Beverly takes it.

“Beverly.” The bracelets tied around her wrist jangle and clank as they shake.

"Hey ladies," their counselor, a skinny brunette with big blue eyes named Nancy, says, poking her head out the back door where the girls are standing. There is a ring of logs circling a fire pit, and steps carved into the sloping hill beside it, which lead to the lake front below. "We are getting ready to play some games. Come on." Her smile is bright and pretty, and Beverly knows the instant flare of annoyance she feels towards the older girl is unwarranted, but she lets it pass.

"Come on, it'll be fun!" Nancy exclaims, then disappears back inside.

"I think she meant to say 'shit show.' But..." Max shrugged as if to say, what choice do we have? Bev nodded and followed her inside. The open windows let in a soothing cross breeze, but with all the bodies inside it was still incredibly hot. Bev's Aerosmith T-shirt clings to her back, sticky with sweat, as she plops onto the floor next to Max, joining the circle.

/if they pull out a guitar and start singing, I swear to God I'm out of here/

"So!" Nancy claps her hands together and glances at her co-counselor, a bespectacled redhead named Barbara who looks as awkward as Bev feels. "We have a few new girls, and plenty of returning faces. So I wanted to go over some rules before we get to know each other, ok?" A few of them nod their heads in agreement. Max looks decidedly bored.

"Camp curfew is nine PM. Lights out is 10 sharp," Barbara says, reading from the clipboard balanced on her hip. She pushes her granny-glasses back up the bridge of her nose. "Breakfast is served at eight, lunch is at noon, and dinner is at six. There are snacks available throughout the day in the mess hall, and the canteen."

"Every day there are activities scheduled, but nothing is mandatory. The only thing I /don't/ want to see is anyone sitting around the cabin all day!" Nancy struggled to look stern. Beverly surprised herself by smiling at that. She glances to her left, noting another girl with wide amber eyes and a mop of curly brown hair. She is drinking on everything Nancy says with furrowed brow - and as though she can sense Bev's gaze, she blinks and turns her head. Sheepishly,

Beverly smiles, and the girl looks surprised.

“There’s all kinds of stuff to do - swimming, boating, soccer, archery - There’s even a drama club for our budding actors!” Nancy giggles. It’s a pretty sound.

“But today, we are simply going to focus on settling in, getting to know each other, and work out any in-cabin kinks we come upon. Sound good?” Barbara smiles, and it transforms her face, and the group seems to warm up to her too.

“I thought we could decorate our cubbies up, so everyone has their own specific place for their belongings,” Nancy says, gesturing to the long table against one wall, where jars of markers and glitter and other crafty, girly things are neatly stored. The group murmurs with excitement while Max audibly groans.

“I just wanna shoot some arrows,” Max says darkly, “at something.” Beverly laughs at that and the pleased smile on her new friend’s face is pretty. She and Max will certainly get along.

“Let’s just get it over with,” Beverly suggested. They, much less eagerly than the others, make their way to the crowded table. Beverly grabs a couple notecards and Max procures some colored pencils, and they retreat to the back corner - smiling as they realize they’ve both picked the same bunk, with Beverly’s bedroll on the bottom and Max’s on the top - they set to work doodling their names and “personalizing” their labels.

Out of the corner of her eye, Beverly can see the other girl, with the dark curly hair, glancing their way, until she seems to pluck up her courage and cross the wooden floorboards until she awkwardly stands in front of them. Beverly can practically feel the anxiety rolling off her in waves.

“Hi,” Beverly says. She feels bad just looking at her - knobby knees poking out of cut-off jeans, wearing a long-sleeve shirt under a T-shirt despite the eighty degree, humid heat. She doesn’t look bothered, though - she’s not even flushed.

“Hi,” she says softly. “Can I sit with you?”

Max rolls her eyes and blows out a sigh. “As long as you don’t talk about how cute Tom Cruise is.”

“Who is Tom Cruise?” Her delicate features slide into a frown and Beverly chuckles.

“You know, from Risky Business?” She prompted, but the other girl just shakes her dark curls and looks bewildered. “Jeez, do you live under a rock?” She and Max share incredulous looks.

“We don’t have a TV.” Even Beverly, before living with her aunt, had a television. Sometimes, the shows and movies and cartoons were her only comfort, her only escape, from the man she called father.

“What’s your name?” Beverly asks, grabbing a blank notecard and watching her face shift into a shy, soft smile.

“Everyone calls me Jane, now.” As if that wasn’t just fascinating and mysterious. Beverly senses that maybe, she and this girl could have something in common.

“Jane. That’s pretty,” Beverly says, and begins to loop and scrawl the short four letters on the notecard in a soft pink color. Jane watches over her shoulder, while Max eyes them both quite guardedly. Adding a few little curlicues, some green ivy vines around the edges, and some purple flowers, Beverly takes a moment to admire her handiwork before handing it to the other girl. She tosses her long red ponytail over her shoulder as Jane cradles the flimsy paper card in her hands like it’s a precious artifact.

“Thank you,” she murmurs, tracing the letters.

The sinking feeling in Bev’s stomach only grows more insistent. There is definitely something unsettling about Jane.

“All right, you little shit heads.” Steve Harrington claps his hands together, drawing the attention of the ten pubescent guys arguing and chattering loudly as they get their things settled in. It’s Steve’s second summer as a counselor at Camp Byers, and though he would never admit it, he was quite attached to the rustic campground. And

the annoying little campers.

"I'm not your babysitter. I mean, I /am/ but I'm not gonna tell you what to do. Unless you're being stupid, of course." He grins at their flushed faces - it's hotter than Hades with all of them in the cabin, and Deer Hollow is nestled in a stagnant valley where there is no breeze to sweep through the open windows. It has the benefit of privacy, which makes it perfect for sneaking beers or Nancy, but other than that it's kind of crappy. Tall oaks, spruces, and maples create a shady canopy, and the ground is littered with crunchy leaves beneath sneakers. Afforded the privacy of being on the very edge of the camp's perimeter, Steve thinks the heat is worth the trade.

"Excuse me," a short bit with dark hair and round, dark eyes interjects. "How far are we from the infirmary? I have asthma." One hand protectively squeezes the fanny pack on his waist and Steve resists the urge to roll his eyes. There's always one of these hypochondriac types. "Also, I noticed in the sink there is an alarming growth of some kind of fungus? Also, there's no bathroom in this cabin?"

"There's a latrine and wash station right out there. The infirmary is a ways away - you have an inhaler?" The kid's eyes go wide with panic but he nods once, that he does. "Don't lose it."

"Don't w-worry," a tall, good looking kid with reddish-brown hair and a kind smile, says. "I-I can r-r-run pretty f-fast." He winks and the short whiner goes pink. Steve sighs.

"So, we have about an hour before lunch. How about you guys get unpacked, introduce yourselves... you know. Do you thing." Steve gestures around the cabin, and the boys take the hint. He listens as he gets his cot set up, plugging in his radio-alarm clock and tucking his toiletry bag under the bed. Roughing it is not Steve's strongest trait, and he refuses to look like some kind of homeless refugee just because he's going to be living in the woods for the next two months.

His co-counselor, someone named Billy, has yet to show, and Steve glances at the empty cot across the room from his with a frustrated breath. Leaving him with all these kids -

"Let's just flip for it," one voice cuts into his inner musings.

"No way. I always have top bunk."

"There's a free top over here," a chubby boy with sandy blonde hair offers softly. The nearly identical twin boys shoot him looks - the one without glasses looking thankful, the one with looking annoyed.

"I'm the oldest, so I get the top," Glasses says, crossing his arms over his chest.

His twins throws his hands up with a frustrated noise, but flips onto the thin mattress on the bottom bunk without comment.

They are a motley crew, the kids Steve has been saddled with. The twins, the heavy-set kid, Asthma kid, the one that claims he can run fast, a blonde, frizzy kid with a yarmulke on his head and dorky pleated khaki shorts, a kid with no front teeth, two black boys, though in skin tone and dress and literally everything /but/ their melanin seeming very different, and his boss's youngest son, Will. It was like Steve had been saddled with the fourth string, but he didn't mind. They were old enough to do their own thing, for the most part.

"Whoa, did you really bring /books/ to camp?" The loudmouth with the glasses was asking the smaller of the two black kids, who had a camouflage bandana wrapped around his head. "Get a load of this guy, fellas." He jerked his thumb in the kid's direction and guffawed.

"They aren't books, they're /manuals/," the Toothless kid lisps, which only gets four-eyes laughing harder.

"I brought books," pipes up the tall blonde, who suddenly turns pink and bashful when everyone turns to look at him. "I like... birds..."

"Jesus," mutters Glasses.

"Shut up, Richie," his twin states without much fire. Like he's probably said it a million times before.

"Yeah, Trashmouth," Steve finally says, causing them all the straighten up and shut their mouths. /ah, to be powerful/ Steve thinks with a grin. "Birds are cool." The blushing boy smiles at his

sneakers. "I'm never gonna remember all of your names -"

"We could make badges," suggests the round boy with flushed cheeks. "For our cubbies. It could help."

"Good thinkin' Lincoln," Steve says, pointing at the kid gratefully. They don't have any art supplies, and the trek to the Drama Hut, which houses the arts and crafts crap as well as costumes and scenery and an old, out of tune piano, in this heat, makes Steve sweat in anticipation. However, Nancy and Barbara are sure to have collected a few supplies, and Chicki Ridge, their campsite, is much closer.

And the prospect of seeing his sort of girlfriend is all the convincing Steve needs. "All right, guys. Time for a field trip." They don't even complain as they file out of the squat log cabin, following him into the bright sunshine.

"How's it going?" Joyce Byers asks, causing Jim Hopper to glance up from the arduous task of cooking for a hundred and fifty campers and staff. Benny Hammond, his oldest childhood friend, is beside him, flushed and sweating in the cramped but spotless kitchen. He's agreed to take a break a few days a week to help Jim out - having gotten him the job, much to Jim's horror and surprise, Benny figured he ought to show the guy how it's done.

"It's good. Hop's a natural," Benny praises with a genuine grin, which causes the former chief of police to roll his eyes and huff at the grill, where he's been making countless grilled cheese sandwiches for the past half hour.

"Great." Joyce flashes a dazzling smile, dark eyes obscured by the deep auburn hair falling into her face. It's hard to believe the woman she's grown into; as a youth, she was pretty and petite, and her anarchist attitude had drawn him in more than her physical appearance. The three of them - Joyce, Benny, and Hopper - had been close in high school, prone to ditching class and sneaking cigarettes and Schnapps in the parking lot during lunch.

It's sort of humiliating, working as a cook at /her/ summer camp. But

after ‘Nam, and then Sarah, and then his wife leaving him... And of course, getting shot by some punk with nothing to lose, somehow fucking the nerves in his left leg up and making him totally useless as a cop... Jim had been listless, foundering, until Benny approached him with this idea. Jim knew he couldn’t ride a desk for the rest of his career, and Benny said it was a mindless, routine job. It was definitely better than filling out paperwork all day while his former deputies shot him pitiful looks.

“Great! The hoppers will be here in twenty to get the tables set up -“

“Hoppers?” Jim frowned in confusion.

“Yeah, they’re like the designated waiter for the table. It’s easier than having everyone running higgly-piggly. They kind of, ya know, hop to it,” Joyce says with a silly smile. She seems in her element here, Jim notes, before nodding and returning his blue gaze to the flat top grill in front of him. He tunes out the chatter of his old friends, flipping the sandwiches one by one, satisfied at the golden brown hue of the bread.

The mess hall is big, with massive windows overlooking the pretty lake and thick green forest surrounding them. A Formica bar separated the kitchen from the round tables that dot the hardwood floor, and the exposed rafters are hung with flags. A tall stone chimney is littered with posters and pictures of summers past. Jim had studied them with dull interest in his spare moments.

He heard Benny singing Neil Diamond under his breath, before disappearing into the pantry. A delicate sound of a soft voice grabbed his attention, and he glances to the bar to find a small, brown-eyed girl standing there.

“Hey,” he says, unsure of what to do.

“Hi.”

They stare at each other for a few long beats. “I’m supposed to be... hopping?” She crinkles her brow as if she’s uncertain. There’s a strange otherworldly quality to her.

He smiles kindly at her. "Gotcha. Wait right there." She nods yes and he turns from the grill to find Benny. When he returns with directions to have her start setting out cups and plates and silverware, he finds a tall, freckled kid standing beside her.

Jim would have to be blind not to see their soft pink cheeks and sneaky glances. Sighing, he starts unloading the plastic plates from the shelving unit on one wall. Sarah would have liked it here - but he shoves that thought deeply down and gives the bashful kids their instruction.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

Introductions, nicknames, a familiar face, and just who is Nancy making out with?

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry this is short & uneventful. Life with three toddlers, an infant, a puppy, and no partner is cray. Hoping to update other docs this weekend! Thank you for the kind reviews and sticking with me despite the break. You're all fantastic!

Also, if there's anything you'd like to see in this fic, feel free to drop me some suggestions. I have an overall plot but I'm eager to add snippets of what you guys want, too!

As soon as he sees her, Ben Hanscom is in love. She's beautiful, in a way that he's never seen in person. Movies, definitely - pale skin and big eyes that aren't quite blue, not quite green. Long eyelashes and silky red hair that falls in wavy ropes down her shoulders and back. For a moment, it's like all the air leaves the room and his round, flushed cheeks go impossibly pinker. She's coming towards him, in slow motion, and he hears old Motown music in his head...

"Bill Denbrough?" Her musical voice is the needle scratching off the record, the cold water needed to douse him back into reality.

Standing outside the girls' cabin while their counselor, Steve, had gone inside to request art supplies, the guys have been making awkward small talk and shifting uncomfortably. Richie and Mike, the nearly identical twins, have been arguing over whether or not their sister has already banged the counselor, and why he acts like he doesn't know who they are. Ben, as usual, feels out of place.

He's not funny - in an obnoxious way - like Richie. He's not cool and stoic like Mike H (Ben fights the urge to label him 'black Mike,'

because he knows it's not right and there are probably a million more defining qualities to the guy), or full of random information like Stanley, who has been pointing out various plants and birds and wild life as they trekked through the camp. Even Eddie, who is small but also fierce, seems fascinating. His fanny pack bulges at the seems as he rambles somewhat paranoid nonsense about poison ivy, not touching any feathers they might happen upon ("do you know how many /diseases/ birds carry?!"), the importance of staying hydrated... Ben gets the sense that it's his first time away from home, and that maybe his parents had been a bit too dramatic and thorough when explaining the wonder of nature.

Ben watches, spellbound, as the pretty redhead girl walks right up to the auburn-haired Bill, who can barely make it through a sentence without a punishing stutter jumbling his words, and pulls him into a tight hug. Bill looks as stunned as the rest of them - Ben realizes he's not the only one enraptured by her. Dustin, the kid with no front teeth and frizzy, mouse-brown hair sticking out from under his hat, had a dumbstruck look on his soft face.

"Be-be-Beverly M-Marsh," Bill stammers when she pulls back. Her eyes are dancing above a crooked smile, and Ben thinks he would go to great lengths to have the beauty look upon him like that.

"What are you doing here?" This Beverly Marsh is holding both of Bill's hands and Bill stares at their joined appendages somewhat in disbelief. Beverly Marsh doesn't seem to notice.

"M-my parents thought I-I-it would be g-good, after Ge-Ge-Georgie." Bill blushes and a darkness slides over his features. Ben is curious, but respectful and knows he won't push despite his burning thirst for answers. He's always like that, with something he gets hooked on. Particularly history, but the sorrow on his cabin-mates face is enough to make him wonder.

"Hey, Big Bill, ya gonna introduce us or what?" Richie puts his hands on his hips and squints through his thick lenses at the pair.

"S-s-Sorry," Bill says, blushing deeper. "This is Be-Beverly. W-w-we go to sc-school to-ge-gether." Bill swallows thickly.

"It'll take all day if /you/ introduce us," Richie says, but not harshly. He's trying to make it a joke, and Bill chuckles and ducks his head. "Most importantly, I'm Richie Wheeler. That ugly shmuck is my brother Mike -"

"Oh shut it, Trashmouth," Mike says with a dramatic eye roll. Apparently, Steve's nickname from earlier stuck.

"Then there's Stan the Man, Eddie Spaghetti, Haystack, The Cool Mike, Dustin, Mucus, and Will." Haystack? Obviously it's Ben, but he's not sure if he's offended or not.

Beverly is grinning widely. Another redhead (do they run in pairs? Ben wonders with an inner smile) sticks her head out the door. She crosses her arms and sets her cool green stare on them.

Ben wonders at Richie's nicknames. He's surprised that he's not offended, and likes that he found a better identifier for Mike than 'black.' The other guys are shifting around nervously, awkwardly, but if Beverly notices she politely doesn't comment.

"Is that a Dig Dug pin?" Dustin asks and breaks away from the group to survey the smaller redhead.

"I am sorry, about your brother," Beverly says quietly.

"I think I'm getting sunburn," Eddie says, to no one in particular, but Stanley comes to survey the shorter boy's face.

"Your brother called me /Mucus/," Lucas says to Mike, who shrugs and looks exasperated. It's a lot for Ben to take in. Cool Mike, Will, and himself stand together, observing, but not unhappy. It's warm, it's summer, and it's a mess of too many conversations but even though he's not directly included, Ben feels like he's part of the gang for the first time in his life. That's good enough, he thinks.

After lunch, Beverly wants to explore the camp, and Max tags along with quiet Jane following too. The campground is thick with trees and bushes and bramble off the narrow dirt roads, but there are smaller trails weaving through the brush and once the girls smell like

Banana Boat and Off! they head into the woods with determination.

“So was that like, your boyfriend?” Max asks.

Beverly is glad she's leading them as she blushes. “No, I just know him from back home.” Sweet Bill Denbrough with the stutter and the dead brother. If it was anyone else, she would have felt apathetic. Beverly Marsh had her own shit to worry about. But Bill was so sweet, so pure, that it made her chest ache to think of the sadness that had darkened his eyes earlier. His parents were right to send him away, get him out of Derry for a while. Out of his head. He seemed lighter and smiled bigger already and it was only day one.

“Uh huh. That's why you were all over him?” Max is teasing and Bev chuckles to herself. They're far enough off the trail that sneaking a cigarette isn't super dangerous, so she fishes her pack and lighter out of her backpack to light one.

“What about you, Mad Max? See anyone you liked?” Beverly holds her smoke between her teeth and winks as the smaller redhead's face floods with color.

“Ugh, no. They were all just... annoying.” Max dramatically shivers in disgust.

“What about you, Jane?” Beverly encourages and Jane smiles very softly but shakes her head. The trio of girls continue, leisurely, as the trail snakes up a hill. They chat about nothing, really - music (they all reluctantly admit that Madonna is catchy as hell, the Beatles are an all time favorite, and Bev and Max tease Jane when she says she likes George Michael), movies (they all agree that Ghostbusters is fantastic and they all secretly loved Footloose). Their lives back home... Beverly doesn't talk about her father, instead explaining that she lived with her aunt and it was just the two of them. Max's parents are divorced, and her step father and brother were the definition of wasteoids.

“Billy is a counselor here. You'll meet him,” Max says as she crouches to examine a cluster of yellow wildflowers. She frowns. “He thinks he's Rob Lowe.”

“What about you, Jane?” Beverly tries to include the practically mute girl. She is curious, and once she gets curious, it’s hard to deter herself. She glances over her slender shoulder to find Jane chewing her lip and focusing on the forest floor as they trek up the hill.

“I live with a foster family,” she says after a long stretch of silence. “My papa... isn’t a good father.” The weight of her words are a heavy stone in Beverly’s belly and despite the humid summer air she shivers, knowingly. They have all stopped and Max even looks sad - she seems to have two moods, annoyed and amused, and the frown that turns her lips down along with the furrowed brow shows her concern.

“My Dad was shitty, too.” Beverly stomps her smoke out and picks up the butt, not wanting to litter or leave evidence. “You don’t have to talk about it. But I’m always here if you do.”

Jane gives her a relieved smile. “Thank you.”

They continue on until they reach the top of the hill and burst from the thick of woods into a flat, open field. A huge pavilion sits a ways away, casting a long shadow on a smaller, brown cottage. Through the trees, Bev could see the glimmering lake below.

“Wonder what this is?” Max muses. They amble over, peeking into the windows of the cottage. Jane notices the sign above the door first.

“Drama Hut.” She points. Bev tries the door, unsurprised to find it locked, and slides a bobby-pin out of her hair, holds it up and winks at her new friends. Jane looks puzzled, Max impressed. The padlock takes only a few seconds of careful manipulation before it dislodges.

“We’re in,” Bev says with a smug smile.

“You /have/ to teach me how to do that!” Max has respect shining in her sea green eyes. Slipping inside, it takes a moment for her eyes to adjust, and Beverly realizes they are surrounded by an assortment of costumes, painted scenery - trees and rocks and what looks like maybe a castle - an ancient looking piano... she runs her fingers over a rack of costumes and continues into the cabin.

“This is amazing.” Max holds up a lion costume with a mangy looking orange mane, and Jane has put on a massive felt hat with a black feather stuck in the brim. Laughing, they all find ridiculous things to wear - a bright pink feather boa for Beverly, knee high go-go boots for Max, some sort of Tin-Man or maybe knights armor for Jane. After getting over the novelty of it, they collapse onto a dusty, ancient couch that puffs out dust under their weight.

“This is actually kinda cool,” Max admits, glancing around the exposed rafters where cobwebs hang thick. “We should make this like, our hide out.”

“Definitely,” Beverly agrees. Jane is staring out the window, and she follows her line of sight. Nancy, their camp counselor, and another guy that Beverly doesn’t recognize, are standing against a tree. It doesn’t take long for Beverly to realize what they’re doing. Smirking at Jane, she flops back on the couch again and pulls out another cigarette. If their counselor is doing indecent things against some tree in the woods, she’s not so worried about being busted with a Marlboro.
